

## The Lived Experiences of Adolescents Born in the 2000s Engaged in Opposite-Sex Relationships

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### 1. Round 1

#### 1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The last paragraph of the introduction states, “research in this field has often overlooked the nuanced, context-specific lived experiences of adolescents”. This claim needs strengthening with explicit citation density (e.g., mention how prior studies are predominantly quantitative and cross-sectional).

In the paragraph beginning “Cultural and contextual factors also critically shape...”, cultural transition is described but not conceptually framed (e.g., theories of cultural change or adolescent identity formation in transitional societies). Integrating a theoretical lens (e.g., Eriksonian psychosocial theory or identity vs. role confusion) would improve conceptual depth.

While the text notes “member checking, peer debriefing, and negative case analysis,” it does not indicate how many participants were involved in member checks or how disagreements were handled. This should be clarified.

There is no description of the researchers’ positionality or potential biases. Including a reflexivity statement (e.g., background, prior experiences with adolescents, stance on opposite-sex relationships) is essential in grounded theory studies.

The data analysis section states “open coding, axial coding, and selective coding” were used, but does not specify the number of codes generated at each stage. Adding counts (e.g., “67 open codes grouped into 11 axial categories”) would enhance auditability.

In Table 1, participants are numbered (e.g., “Participant 2”) but not linked to demographic characteristics. Adding brief attributes (age, gender) would allow readers to interpret variation across participants.

The article references “Figure 1: Final Model” but provides no narrative explanation of this model in the text. A paragraph interpreting the model’s components and interconnections should be added.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

### 1.2. *Reviewer 2*

Reviewer:

In “Participants were recruited through purposive sampling until theoretical saturation was achieved”, the authors should specify how saturation was operationalized (e.g., what indicators were used to decide saturation had occurred).

The sentence “The participants included both males and females aged between 16 and 21” should be expanded with additional demographic information such as socioeconomic background, family structure, or school type to assess transferability.

In the “Measures” section, the authors state “The interview guide was developed based on the research objectives” but do not append or describe sample questions. Providing at least 3–4 example questions would enhance transparency and replicability.

The discussion interprets findings but does not link them to broader theoretical frameworks of adolescent development (e.g., Erikson’s stages, attachment theory, social constructivism). This limits theoretical contribution and should be addressed.

The discussion states “These findings illuminate the multifaceted nature of adolescent romantic relationships” but does not caution that results are culturally bounded to Shiraz/Iran. This limitation should be explicitly stated to avoid overgeneralization.

The discussion briefly mentions “some evidence suggesting that girls may exhibit greater emotional investment” but does not provide any gender-differentiated findings from this dataset. A more nuanced gendered analysis would strengthen interpretive depth.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

## 2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.